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Academic skills in higher education: Does age matter?

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ACADEMIC SKILLS ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Academic Skills Issues in Higher Education: Who needs them and wants them?

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ACADEMIC SKILLS ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Outline

Aims

Study Area

Academic Skills

Data Collection

Data Analysis

Results

Implications



ACADEMIC SKILLS ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Aims

What are the academic skills issues for students?

The similarities and differences of the perceptions between student groups.



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Study Area

Post-1992 'New' University

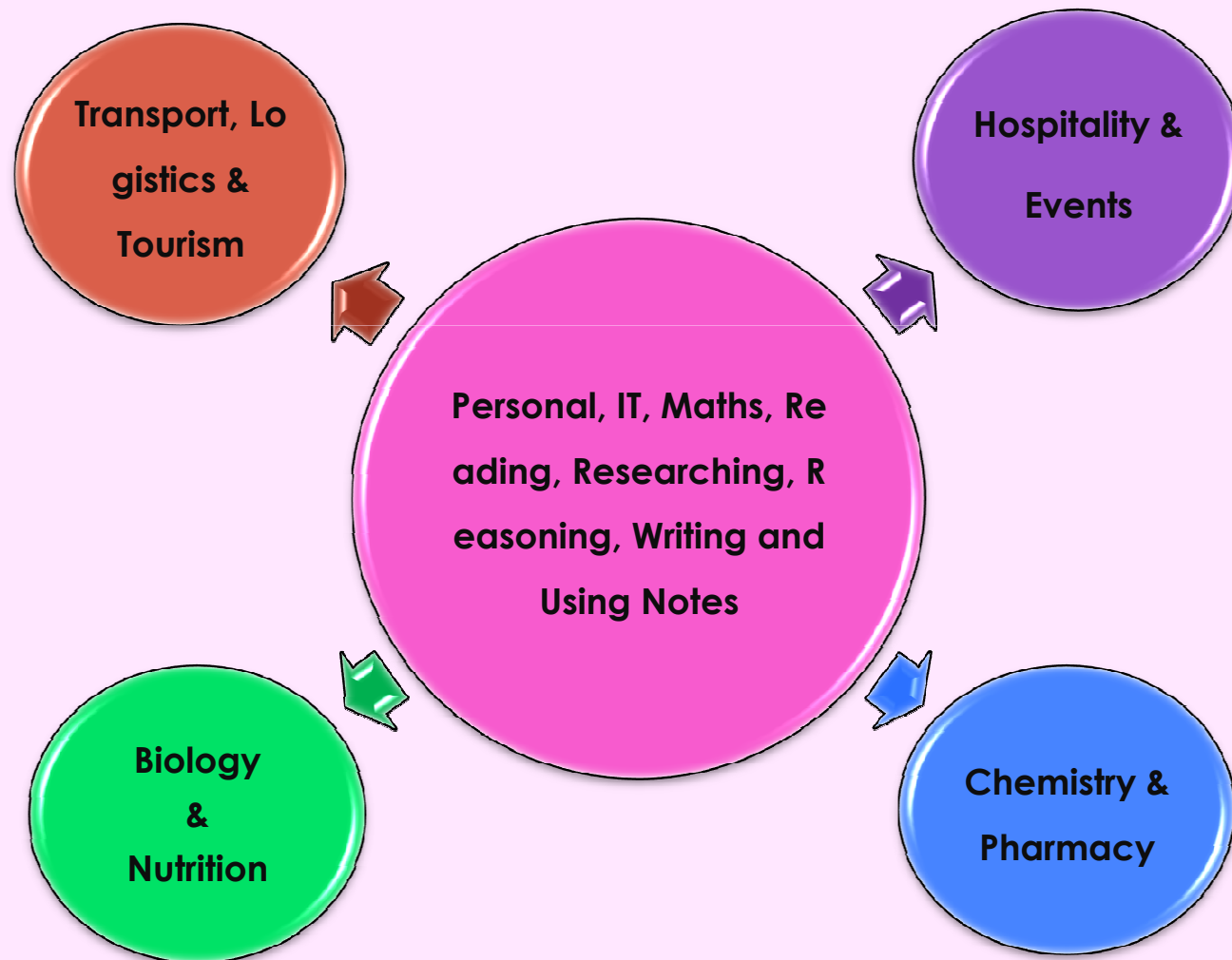
**Department of Chemical & Biological
Sciences (DOCABS)**

**Department of Logistics & Hospitality
Management (DOLHM)**

1st year form 39.6 % of population

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Academic Skills





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Data Collection

Quantitative and qualitative

Online questionnaire for 1st year students:

cohort 2008/9 (21.1%)

cohort 2009/10 (35.1%)

Overall 27.2% = 228 students

Focus groups for students



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Data Analysis Areas

**Descriptive and statistical analysis
with qualitative triangulation.**

Students' skill rating

Instructed on course

Would prefer further training

Sought additional support

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Students' Own Skill Ratings

Academic Subject	Mean skill rating		unpaired t-test p value	Importance Ranking	
	1 low 5 high			1 high 8 low	
	A+	<A		A+	<A
Personal	3.61	3.48	0.20	1	1
Writing	3.41	3.29	0.26	6	4
Reading	3.55	3.42	0.17	5	3
Research	3.62	3.71	0.41	7	7
IT	4.22	3.90	0.02	2	2
Notes	3.51	3.42	0.42	4	6
Reasoning	3.44	3.15	0.03	8	8
Numeracy	3.89	3.52	0.002	3	5
Mean	3.66	3.49			
STD	0.27	0.23			



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Students Own Skill Comments

It's been over 10 years since I have been in school, and technology and accessing resources have changed dramatically (*Student 56, <A*)

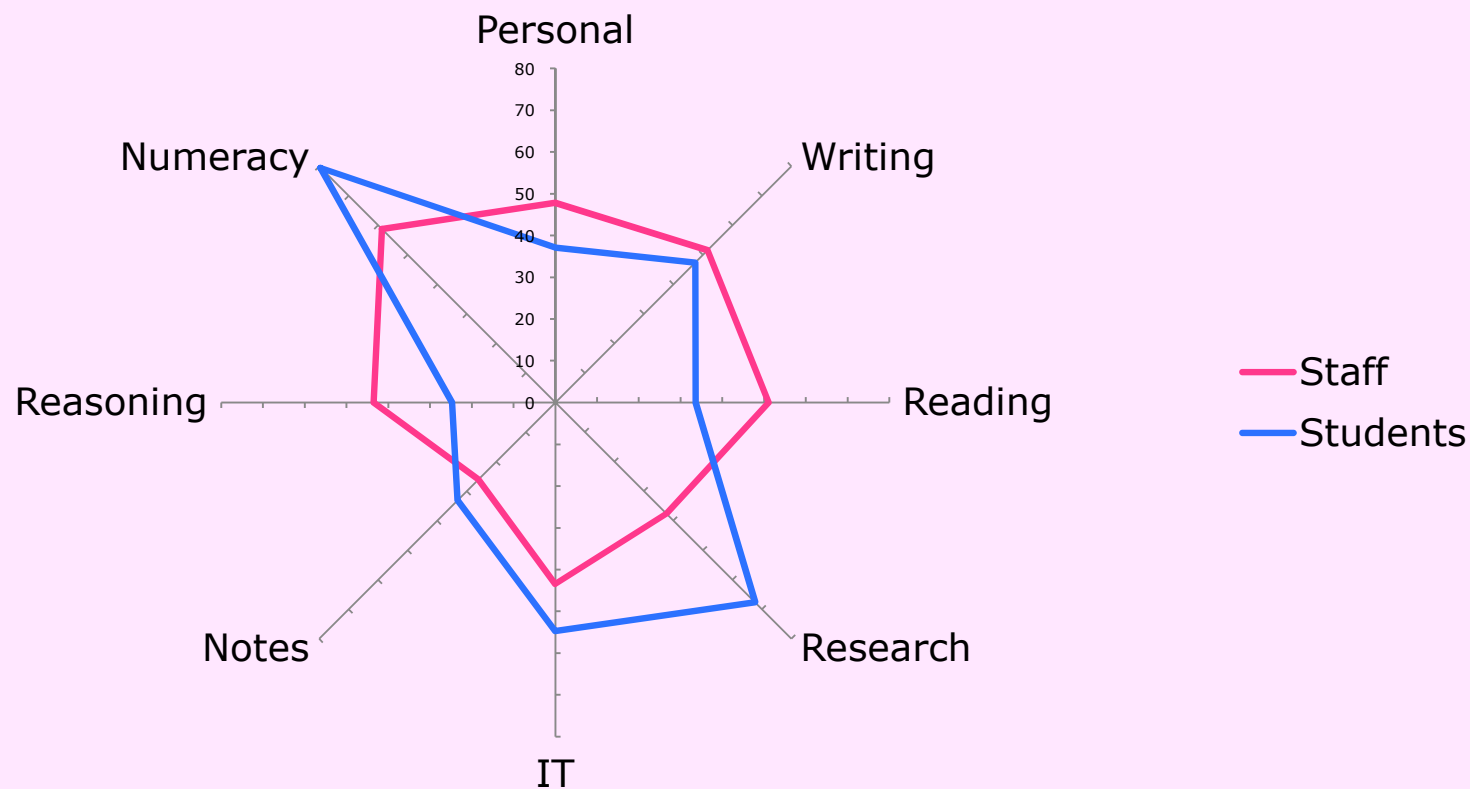
It would be useful for the academic staff to remember that we are not all fresh from college (*Student 1, <A*)

Most of us have come from college straight away and haven't done proper reports or essays (*Student F2, A+*)

I think the teachers expect you to come to university with all the relevant knowledge but that isn't always the case and you feel stupid when you don't know what to do (*Student 162, A+*)

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DOCAB Instruction %

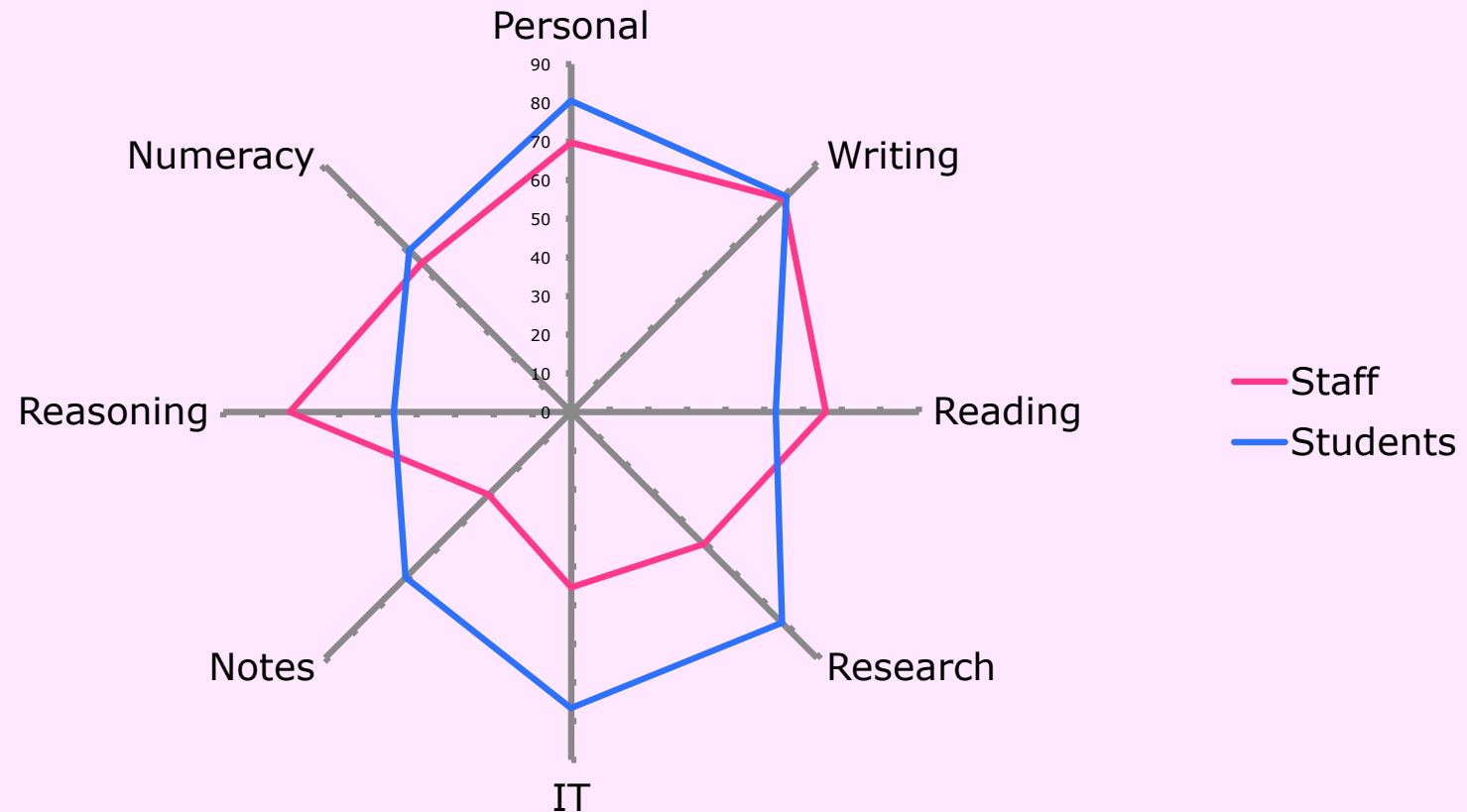


Academic skills in chemistry is taught reasonably well (*Student 5, <A*)

Not enough time was spent on the more important areas such as essay and report writing (*Student 223, A+*)

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DOLHM Instruction %

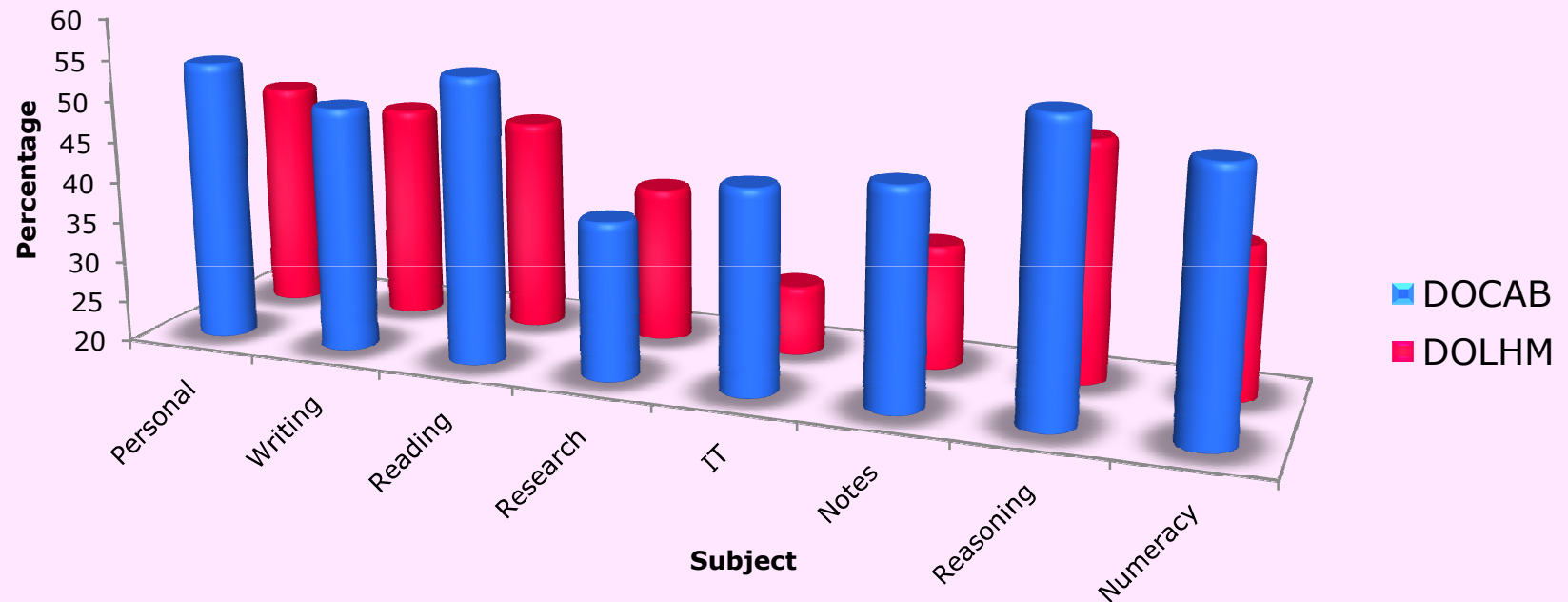


Sometimes we had just given a sheet and then expected to just read it; not really being taught how to do it (*Student F3, A+*)

Some lecturers give information but you don't get the opportunity to practice with answers available (*Student 204, A+*)

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Further Training Required %

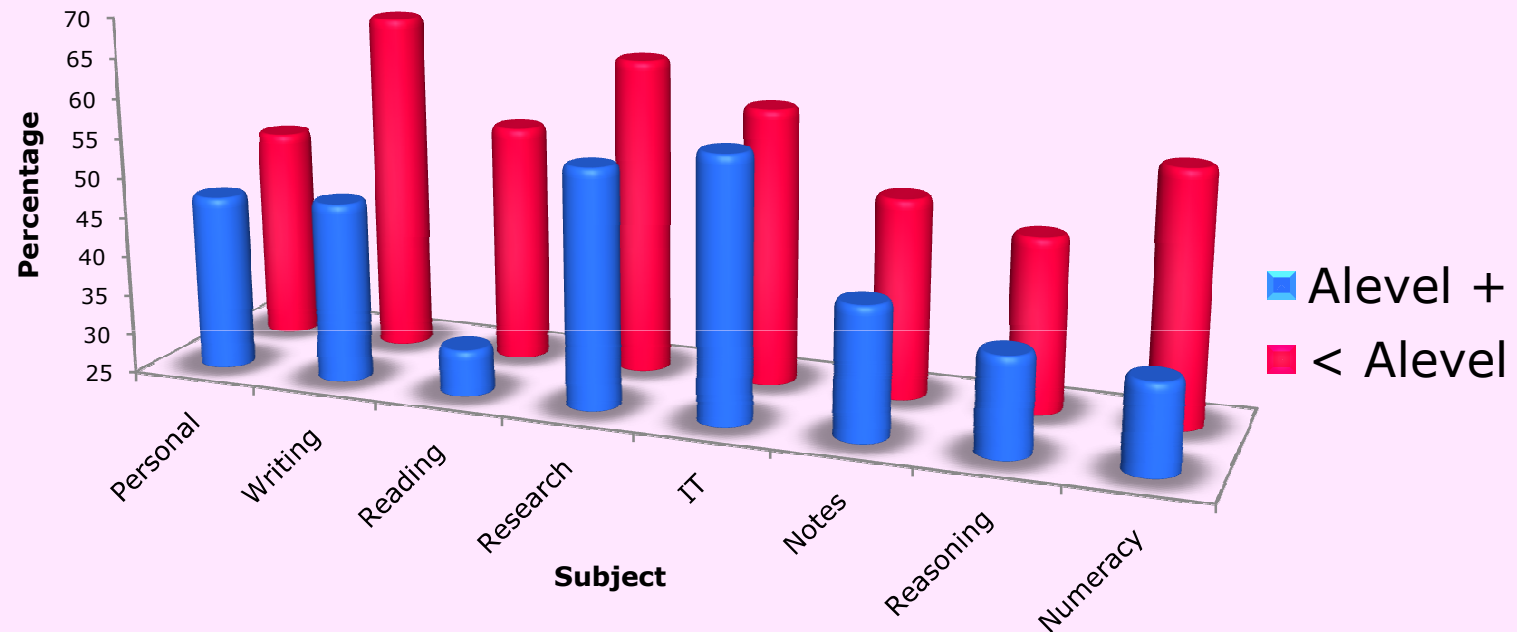


Without training my work is unlikely to improve much and achieve its maximum potential (*Student 10, A+*)

I never know where to start an essay. It makes me want to leave it until the last minute and then I stress about getting it done (*Student 171, <A*)

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Additional Support by Subject %



Some of the lecturers don't seem to understand that first years need more help to begin with than they are given (*Student 195, A+*)

Academic skill which I need are available at the uni but you have to hunt them down and make appointments (*Student 97, <A*)



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Implications

When something new is required, students would benefit from being shown the expected way of doing it, rather than being left to work it out for themselves.

Universities need to be more aware that some problems are about perceptions and confidence in abilities.

There is a fundamental issue about the lack of higher level skills that students possess when starting university.

It is important to have academic skills instruction in first year for all students as there are no guarantees that students are prepared for studying at a tertiary level.



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